

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 06561 01 OF 02 311038Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 SSM-03 HA-05 AID-05 /095 W
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P R 310911Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6310
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE 307
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 6561

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT MILI LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION DECEMBER 23-29

REF: BEIRUT 6448 (DTG 240900Z DEC 77)

1. SUMMARY. THIS WEEK, LEBANESE GOVERNMENT LEADERS DID NOT COMMENT PUBLICLY ON PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SADAT IN ISMAILIA, BUT PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL AND ISLAMIC COUNCIL PRESIDENT SHAFFIQ WAZZAN EXPRESSED
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 06561 01 OF 02 311038Z

OPPOSITION TO ANY PLAN FOR THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT OF PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON. BACHIR GEMAYEL REPORTEDLY SAW AN OPPORTUNITY FOR HIS NOTION OF THE FUTURE OF LEBANON IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS. PRIME MINISTER AL HOSS VISITED DAMASCUS. A SMALL BOMB WENT OFF IN FRONT OF WAZZAN'S HOUSE. THERE WAS SPORADIC SHELLING IN SOUTH LEBANON. A JAPANESE CITIZEN WAS KILLED BY SYRIAN

SOLDIERS AT AN ADF CHECKPOINT. THE GOL ANNOUNCED IT WOULD SEEK ANOTHER EXTENSION OF PARLIAMENT'S TERM. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS PROPOSED CONTROVERSIAL NEW RENT LAW, APPROVED A DECREE PROVIDING FOR A MIXED COMPANY TO RUN LEBANESE TELEVISION, AND ACCEPTED THE RESIGNATIONS OF 31 COLONELS. LEBANON OBTAINED MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM JORDAN AND FROM BRITAIN. END SUMMARY.

2. GOL REFRAINS FROM COMMENT ON ISMAILIA MEETING. LEBANESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS DID NOT COMMENT PUBLICLY ON PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S MEETING IN ISMAILIA WITH PRESIDENT SADAT, BUT THE BEIRUT PRESS CALLED IT A DISAPPOINTMENT. ON DECEMBER 25 ABOUT 5,000 PALESTINIANS DEMONSTRATED PEACEFULLY AT THE MUNICIPAL STADIUM IN BEIRUT AGAINST THE MEETING IN ISMAILIA WITH PRESIDENT SADAT, BUT OTHERWISE LIFE IN THE CITY WAS NORMAL. (TWO HIGH PERFORMANCE AIRCRAFT, PRESUMABLY ISRAELI, OVERFLEW BEIRUT THE SAME DAY).

3. CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS OPPOSE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT OF PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON. REFERRING OBLIQUELY TO BEGIN'S REPORTED PEACE PLAN, PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL SAID ON DECEMBER 27 THAT "IF IT IS INTENDED THAT THE PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE SETTLED IN LEBANON, THEN WE DECLARE WITH COMPLETE FRANKNESS THAT WE SHALL NEVER ACCEPT SUCH A PROJECT," THE ARAB NEWS AGENCY
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 06561 01 OF 02 311038Z

REPORTED. ISLAMIC COUNCIL PRESIDENT SHAFFIQ WAZZAN TOLD REPORTERS ON DECEMBER 27 THAT THE COUNCIL REJECTED ANY "PROPOSAL FOR THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT OF PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON." HE ADDED THAT SINCE MOSLEMS AND CHRISTIANS "SHARE THESE VIEWS", NOTHING SHOULD STAND IN THE WAY OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION.

4. SHAFFIQ WAZZAN'S HOUSE BOMBED. A SMALL BOMB WENT OFF AT THE HOME OF WAZZAN IN WEST BEIRUT ON DECEMBER 28, BUT THERE WERE NO CASUALTIES. (SOME LOCAL OBSERVERS SPECULATED THAT THE PALESTINIANS WERE RETALIATING FOR WAZZAN'S REMARKS THE DAY BEFORE.) THE SAME DAY, ANOTHER BOMB WENT OFF BEFORE A STORE NEAR AMIN GEMAYEL'S HOUSE IN EAST BEIRUT, BUT THERE WERE NO CASUALTIES.

5. FEARS OF BACHIR. ALTHOUGH BACHIR GEMAYEL APPEARS PRIVATELY TO BE LESS THAN FULLY SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS OF HIS VISIT TO THE U.S., HE IS CLAIMING IT WAS A HUGE SUCCESS. HE IS TELLING COLLABORATORS THAT THERE IS ROOM IN THE CURRENT U.S. MIDDLE EAST STRATEGY FOR AN ISRAELI OPERATION AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS IN SOUTH LEBANON, AND IS CONFIDENT THAT IT WILL TAKE PLACE.

MODERATE PHALANGISTS AND NOW ALSO CHAMOUNISTS ARE FEARFUL THAT HE ASPIRES TO SUPREME POLITICAL POWER IN LEBANON FOR HIMSELF, WITH ISRAELI SUPPORT. (SEPARATE MESSAGES TO THE DEPARTMENT.)

6. PRIME MINISTER HOSS VISITS DAMASCUS. PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL HOSS VISITED DAMASCUS ON DECEMBER 24, WHERE HE MET WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD AND OTHER OFFICIALS. HOSS TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE TWO SIDES HAD AGREED ON THE NEED TO IMPLEMENT THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT IN SOUTH LEBANON AND THAT ASSAD HAD AFFIRMED HIS COMPLETE WILLINGNESS "TO HELP LEBANON OVERCOME THE PRESENT, PARTICULARLY DELICATE STAGE," ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH DAILY L'ORIENT-LE JOUR.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 BEIRUT 06561 01 OF 02 311038Z

7. SPORADIC SHELLING IN SOUTH LEBANON. THERE WAS SPORADIC SHELLING IN SOUTH LEBANON, BUT NO MAJOR MOVEMENT OF GROUND FORCES. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS TOLD JOURNALISTS ON DECEMBER 27 THAT WHILE HE HAD NOT LOST HOPE, HE DID "NOT EXPECT AN EARLY SOLUTION" TO THE PROBLEM OF SOUTH LEBANON. OTHER THAN THE HOSS AND BOUTROS STATEMENTS, HOWEVER, THERE IS LITTLE DISCUSSION OF SOUTH LEBANON AT PRESENT IN BEIRUT, WHERE ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON THE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI DIALOGUE.

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 06561 02 OF 02 311046Z

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USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 6561

8. INCIDENTS AT SYRIAN CHECKPOINTS. THERE HAVE BEEN TWO SERIOUS INCIDENTS AT SYRIAN ADF CHECKPOINTS FOR CARS IN BEIRUT OVER THE LAST TWO WEEKS. ON DECEMBER 16 SYRIAN SOLDIERS AT A CHECKPOINT IN EAST BEIRUT STOPPED AND BEAT AN AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN AND HIS WIFE AND SON. ON CHRISTMAS EVE, SYRIAN SOLDIERS KILLED THE JAPANESE MANAGER OF A WEST BEIRUT RESTAURANT AT ANOTHER CHECKPOINT IN EAST BEIRUT, WHEN HE FAILED TO STOP AS ORDERED, ACCORDING TO THE ADF. WE BELIEVE THESE INCIDENTS ARE UNRELATED AND DO NOT REPRESENT A CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 06561 02 OF 02 311046Z

SYSTEMATIC CAMPAIGN AGAINST FOREIGNERS.

9. GOVERNMENT TO PROPOSE NEW EXTENSION FOR PARLIAMENT. THE GOVERNMENT WILL SUBMIT A DRAFT BILL CALLING FOR A FURTHER EXTENSION WITH ELECTION OF THE PRESENT TERM OF THE LEBANESE PARLIAMENT, PRIME MINISTER AL HOSS ANNOUNCED ON DECEMBER 22. THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT WAS ELECTED IN APRIL 1972. ITS TERM WAS DUE TO EXPIRE IN APRIL 1976, BUT WAS EXTENDED FOR TWO YEARS UNTIL APRIL 1978.

10. NEW RENT LAW PROPOSED. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS ON DECEMBER 27 PROPOSED A NEW RENT LAW WHICH, ACCORDING TO FINANCE MINISTER FARID RAPHAEL, WOULD LIMIT THE VALIDITY OF OLD RENT CONTRACTS TO FROM 12 TO 20 YEARS. AFTER THIS TIME, THE LANDLORD WOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO EVICT THE TENANT UPON PAYING HIM COMPENSATION EQUIVALENT TO FIVE TIMES THE DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN THE RENT NOW BEING PAID AND THE RENT CHARGED FOR COMPARABLE APARTMENTS AT THE TIME OF EVICTION. THE GOVERNMENT WILL SUBMIT THE BILL TO PARLIAMENT, WHERE ITS FATE IS UNCERTAIN BECAUSE OF WIDESPREAD CRITICISM OF IT BY POLITICAL FIGURES, THE PRESS AND UNIONS.

11. TELEVISION COMPANY FORMED. THE COUNCIL OF

MINISTERS ON DECEMBER 26 APPROVED THE CREATION OF A MIXED CORPORATION CALLED "TELEVISION DU LIBAN" TO MANAGE THE COUNTRY'S TWO TELEVISION STATIONS. THE GOVERNMENT WILL HOLD 50 PERCENT OF THE SHARES. EACH OF THE TWO PRIVATE COMPANIES -- THE LEBANESE TELEVISION COMPANY AND TELE ORIENT -- THAT RUN THE STATIONS AT PRESENT WILL HOLD 25 PERCENT.

12. CABINET ACCEPTS ARMY RESIGNATIONS. ON DECEMBER
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 06561 02 OF 02 311046Z

26 THE CABINET ACCEPTED THE RESIGNATIONS OF 31 COLONELS FROM THE ARMY. IN FEBRUARY 1977 THE GOVERNMENT HAD INVITED OFFICERS TO RESIGN AND ACCEPT GENEROUS RETIREMENT BENEFITS. BY MAY, 194 OUT OF 945 OFFICERS HAD SUBMITTED THEIR RESIGNATIONS. CG HANNA SAID, ALL 17 BRIGADIERS AND 48 COLONELS WERE AMONG THE 194 RESIGNEES. IN JUNE, HANNA SAID'S AND THE 17 BRIGADIERS' RESIGNATIONS HAD BEEN ACCEPTED, BUT DECISIONS ON THE OTHER OFFICERS WERE DEFERRED FOR SIX MONTHS. A SIMILAR DECISION ON DECEMBER 26 RETIRED ALL COLONELS, EXCEPT PHYSICIANS AND TECHNICAL SPECIALISTS. FURTHER DECISIONS ON LIEUTENANT COLONELS AND BELOW HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL JUNE.

13. JORDANIAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE EQUIPMENT ARRIVES. ON DECEMBER 28 JORDAN DELIVERED 15 RECONDITIONED FOUR-TON FORD CAMOUGLAGE PAINTED COMMERCIAL TYPE FOUR-TON TRUCKS TO THE LEBANESE ARMY HEADQUARTERS AT YARZE. THE TRUCKS WERE A SECOND INSTALLMENT OF JORDANIAN MILITARY AID, FOLLOWING AN EARLIER SHIPMENT OF 36 USED ARMORED CARS AND PERSONNEL CARRIERS. JORDAN ALSO PLANS TO PROVIDE SOME LANDROVER JEEPS, ACCORDING TO JORDANIAN MILATT.

14. UK RELEASES LEBANESE FIGHTER/ATTACK AIRCRAFT. LEBANESE AIR FORCE CHIEF TOLD DAO THAT MOD UK HAS RELEASED THREE HAWKER HUNTER AIRCRAFT WHICH HAD BEEN STORED IN UK SINCE BEFORE THE 1976 FIGHTING. PLANES ARE BEING FLOWN BACK TO LEBANON WITH BRIEF STOPS IN FRANCE AND ITALY, WITH ETA RAYAK AIRBASE DECEMBER 31. PARKER

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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